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BELIEFS OF A BROTHER.

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Truth comes from God.—What the ultimate foundation of religion is.—The truth about the Bible.—God is the God of truth and of love.—The position of the seeker after truth.

I. Everything good and true is of God.

II. No truth can harm the cause of God. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit."

III. No error can help the cause of God.

"No lie is of the truth."
"A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

"Shall we speak unrighteously for God?
And talk deceitfully for him?
Shall we respect his person?
. . . . . .
He will surely reprove us."

—*Job 13:7-10.*

IV. FAITH IN GOD and THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT form the ultimate foundation of religion; not faith in THE BIBLE.

1) Even if we assume that God dictated the Bible, that gives it no authority apart from our experience and our confidence in God. For no assertion can *prove* anything about him that makes it.

"The just shall live by faith" in the case of what God has not yet revealed unto his heart, and by the witness of the Spirit in what He has revealed to him.

2) To say:
The Bible says the church is infallible,
The church says the Bible is infallible,
Therefore, the Bible is infallible;
is not so directly "reasoning in a circle" as to say:

The Bible says the Bible is infallible,
Therefore, the Bible is infallible.

Nor is it so foolish as to say :

The church says this book must be put in the infallible Bible.
The church is *not* infallible,
Therefore, this book must *infallibly* be put in the *infallible* Bible.

3) *But*, in the Bible *no statement of any kind* is made concerning the whole Bible, nor does the word "Bible" therein occur.

4) The word "Holy" used of the Scriptures is the same word that is used of every "saint."

5) In the Bible "The Word of God" is not just another name for "the Bible," but generally means the word of God in the *heart* or on the *lips* of his servants.

6) In the verse : "All scripture is God-breathed ('inspired of God') and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction" (2 Tim. 3 : 16), the following things must be noted :

a) The Revised Version translates it differently.

b) Sweeping assertions in the Bible, as elsewhere, look at the general truth and impression, not every single case.

"Honesty is the best policy."
"Length of days is in her [Wisdom's] right hand, and in her left riches and honor."
—*Proverbs 3 : 16.*

"Be subject to *every* ordinance of man."
—*1 Peter 4 : 13.*

"The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat : *all* things, therefore, *whatsoever* they bid you, these do and observe."
—*Matt. 23 : 12.*

"Wash hands," "observe the traditions of the Elders," crucify our Lord, stone Stephen ?
"Ye, yourselves, are full of *all* knowledge."
—*Rom. 15 : 14.*

And so are numberless passages. "The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life." The Lord rarely *said* what he *meant*, but "spake in parables unto them."

c) Some Scripture was still unwritten when this statement was made.

d) Paul several times uses ideas expressed in the Apocrypha[1] and regularly used the Septuagint that contained it. His words, therefore, naturally include the Apocrypha. We, Protestants, reject it.

e) If the Apostle had meant, or rather had said that all Scripture was *infallible*, we assume his infallibility if we assert that he was infallibly correct.

f) Inspiration is not the same as infallibility. Saintly men now, as then, speak "moved by the Holy Ghost;" saintly men then, as now, often "saw darkly," and "knew in part, and prophesied in part." Neither "they without us" nor we without them "can be made perfect." God used them to lay the *foundation;* the building is not yet finished.

7) THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE IS NOT TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE, AND RESTS UPON THE SAME FOUNDATION AS THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE. God's presence in the Bible is attested by the witness of the Spirit, and by its power.

8) Even the Apostles are forbidden to be called "Rabbi" and "Guide" (καθηρηταί), and they do not lord it over the faith of their brethren. But they do claim to be true men, and they had knowledge for which all must ever be dependent upon them.

9) "In vain do they serve me teaching for commandments of God traditions of men." Blasphemy can as easily lurk in assertion as in denial. Those that dare attribute every statement in the Bible to the Spirit of God, know not what they do.

10) "What will we do without an 'infallible guide'?" We have one—God. Have you put anything in his place? "What will the swimmer do if he gives up his corks and plank?"—*Swim.*

[1] Wisdom 6:18–20; 15:7; Ecclus. 33:13. Note also Tobit 4:15, and Ecclus. 28:2.

"What will the Christian do, if he cannot trust either 'the church' or the Bible (=the old church) as infallible?"—Trust in God, and go forward.

11) The "completion of the canon" is a doctrine of men, nowhere taught in the Bible, and opposed to the fundamental principles of Christianity.

12) It is wrong to remove a great truth to a false foundation. It is unkind to leave the edifice of a noble character on a foundation of sand, hoping that the floods will never come nor the winds blow.

V. The God of love is the God of truth.
"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."
We do not seek after love, fearing and trembling lest, for so doing, we be smitten with a curse. So we should seek after truth in peace and happiness and trust; not in fear as if we will commit a crime if we are not infallible, but with a consciousness of our Father's approval, if we are sincere.

VI. A wrong opinion will never be such a curse as a wrong feeling. We should not feel an abject, unchildlike dread of expressing an opinion. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Our Father knows we are not infallible, and does not desire us to remain dumb until made infallible. He helps us through the gifts he has given others, that we may be bound together by gratitude and sympathy. Discussion is a divinely-appointed means for the growth of knowledge. Truth, humility, and love all grow by frank and humble expression of opinion.

VII. Silence is often the mother of ignorance, conceit, fear, hypocrisy, misunderstandings, and despair; and opposition to the expression of opinion by others begets in them hypocrisy, indifference, hatred, superstition, ignorance, darkness, while in the opposers, however mild and loving, it begets tyranny and ignorance and presumption.
Any man injures his soul who publicly expresses his own opinions and interdicts all opposition and discussion.

VIII. Knowledge can never bless like love. Search after knowledge becomes a snare then when for it we lose a sweet unselfish daily life of childlike trust and happiness. A loving heart is above "all knowledge" and "all mysteries."

"He that loveth abideth in God and God in him."

That our Father may help us to help each other, brothers, is the prayer of your brother.